

Barton Davies
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Dualtone Internship

Dualtone Music Group is an independent record label based in Nashville, TN. Since 2001, Dualtone has followed the same principle: to give artists the attention they deserve and to provide a much better, more personal artist-label relationship than the large, commercial labels can offer. In its early days, Dualtone represented solely country music acts; however, over time Dualtone began to drift away from the ever-popular country music scene in Nashville and created its own musical niche, one could say. Now, Dualtone supports indie-folk-rock bands and solo acts, including The Lumineers, Shovels & Rope, Langhorne Slim, Noah Gunderson, Shakey Graves, and several more. While it may have found a new musical wavelength so to speak, Dualtone's principles remain the same. The label is committed to giving its artists the same amount of attention, regardless of how well each artist is doing. What sets Dualtone apart from so many major record labels is that one very successful artist does not supply all of the income for the label and get all the attention; instead, Dualtone treats every one of its artists equally and places the same importance upon each. Because Dualtone does not represent many artists and consists of only eight employees, it is able to accomplish its fairness principle successfully.

Dualtone is a relatively small record label; therefore, everyone wears "lots of hats." For instance, the same person in charge of album artwork and graphic design also has to manage the CD, vinyl, and t-shirt orders, and thus, must be held financially accountable, as not to order too much or too little of anything. It almost goes without saying that Dualtone relies heavily upon its interns in order to run smoothly. Most of the

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day-to-day work for an intern at Dualtone involves packaging the CD, vinyl, and t-shirt orders that come in on Dualtone's website and shipping it out; updating Dualtone's social media accounts with any news pertaining to the artists' tour dates, music videos, upcoming albums, etc; updating artist itineraries and ticket counts, which are circulated among the Dualtone team as well as the respective artist; and creating new Spotify playlists, related to the weekly AAA and Alternative radio charts.

While I enjoyed the daily routine at Dualtone, I found the long-term, individual research projects that I was assigned to be the most rewarding and beneficial for me and for my musical knowledge and endeavors. The first research project I worked on was for Dualtone president and Sewanee graduate, Paul Roper. For Paul, I made a list of all of the late night television shows, like Jimmy Kimmel, Jimmy Fallon, etc. and researched the musical guests featured on each program, how many viewers each show averaged night-to-night, which demographic dominated the viewership, and finally came up with the most ideal late night television show for each Dualtone artist to appear on. Next, I made a list of Dualtone artists who had appeared on late night television shows and compared their record sales from the week prior to their television appearance to the week after. My favorite research project, however, was the A&R work that I got to do. Basically, I retrieved a list of bands and artists who had just signed with a touring agency, listened to their music, recorded the number of followers they had gathered on their social media pages, and decided whether or not their music fit into Dualtone's indie-rock dynamic. After all of my research, I was finally given the opportunity to pitch two bands to Dualtone's A&R representative, Will McDonald. While the research projects were

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very informative, looking back on it, I was able to gain the most knowledge about the music industry by simply walking around the office and talking to each Dualtone employee about what it is he or she does. I learned so much about the radio industry and radio promotion, just by talking to Lori Kampa about her work in the radio world. In my conversations with Lori, she emphasized the importance of a band having a solid radio presence in all of the major markets that it passes through on its tour. When a band plays a show in a certain city, radio “spins” not only have the potential to attract new fans, they often increase ticket sales for that show, as Lori contacts these DJs and encourages them to promote the upcoming show. Radio is still vastly important in the music industry.

Before my experience at Dualtone, I had several misconceptions about the nature of the music industry: I was under the impression that the radio was a dying industry; I also believed that record labels only considered the music that a band produced and nothing else in its search to sign a band – I didn’t realize the importance of an artists’ image both on-stage and off-stage on social media. I would not trade my time at Dualtone for anything, because I learned so incredibly much about the music business, and in the process, uncovered the best possible trajectory for my band, Boy Named Banjo, and me as we plan to make a living as performing musicians after college.

After talking with the Dualtone employees, after all the day-to-day work, after the several research projects I completed, I came up with the most ideal plan concerning the future of my band. In a perfect world, we would first record a new album (which we have just completed) and not release it, but rather pitch it to touring agencies who represent artists in the Americana realm, appealing to the same audience that we do. Next,

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(assuming we did sign with a touring agency) we would then pitch the album to every AAA radio station in America, and plan our tour schedule around the markets in which we received the largest number of “spins.” In the best-case scenario, after several years of touring and expanding our fan base, a record label would come to us. Just for perspective, before I came to Dualtone, I thought the best route for Boy Named Banjo was to sign with a record label after college; having worked for one, I now know that we are most likely not on any record label’s radar, given our current status. My experience at Dualtone taught me what an independent record label is looking for in a band, and that is very valuable knowledge for somebody in my shoes. I may not have ever come to this realization had I not the wonderful opportunity to intern for Dualtone.